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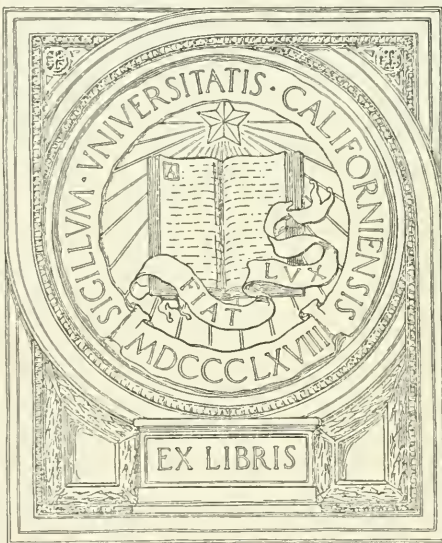


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The Masses and the
Millionaires

By
William Jackson Armstrong

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ROBERT ERNEST COWAN



THE MASSES

AND THE

MILLIONAIRES.



LECTURE

BY

William Jackson Armstrong,

Delivered before the Oakland Nationalist Club, in

Hamilton Hall, Oakland, California, on

Monday Evening, May 26, 1890.



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The Masses and the Millionaires.

FELLOW-CITIZENS: The highest attribute of man is not intelligence. Intelligence is common to the brutes. The noblest characteristic of our race is the capacity for the sense of justice. That sentiment the brutes do not possess. But among civilized or savage men there is none beyond its claim. Whether in marble palaces or African jungles, there is no human heart that does not throb faster at its appeal. By this fact the civilization of man is possible. Justice is the music of history by which man marches to his destiny. The measure of any civilization is the measure of its justice. Men and women are civilized according as they hate injustice. The man who does not feel the wrong of his fellow-men is a savage.

To-day the more enlightened nations of the world are face to face with the greatest problem of justice that has been met in history. With the work of civilization so far accomplished that there is enough accumulated wealth to make comfortable all the people of civilized countries, there remains before the world the spectacle of almost infinite suffering and want. Behind this spectacle of suffering is the spectacle of inequality without corresponding merit. Behind this spectacle of inequality is the specter of fear in the lives of innocent millions.

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ROBERT ERNEST COWAN

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A few centuries ago these grim facts would have troubled nobody. Those were ages of force and brutality. Men were indifferent to the suffering of their fellows. The sense of human rights had not quickened. To-day it is different. General Grant tells us in his memoirs that, knocked about in his boyhood in many log school-houses, he was told so often that a noun was the name of a thing that he began to believe it. A similar fatality has overtaken modern Christianity. It has been preached so long from the pulpits of the world, that there are people even outside of the churches who begin to suspect its doctrines of truth. To the minds of millions of men and women, the equality and brotherhood of man are no longer rhetorical phrases. Miraculous religion has fared as it could; but, side by side with the growth of hideous wrongs, the growth of the moral instinct and the sharpening sense of the solidarity of our race, have been the great features of our time. The presence of poverty and suffering in the midst of plenty is felt as a moral discord. The conscience of civilization is troubled. The last decade of the nineteenth century begins with an interrogation point for justice.

Millions of intelligent men and women are asking what is the matter, and, whatever is the matter, whether it cannot be cured. Other millions of intelligent men and women have begun to make answers to this question. There are five millions of Socialists in Germany. There are ten millions of incipient Socialists in the United States. The opinion of these people, whether guided or misguided, will some November morning make a mighty force at the ballot-box. These thinking and intelligent people assert that *injustice* is the matter with our modern society. They assert that the civilization of christendom is trying to live a lie,—with its

profession and its practice at swords' points. They point to the suggestive fact that for nineteen centuries it has preached from its pulpits the Sermon on the Mount, and lived in its marts by the gospel of Mammon; that its teaching and its example have never been introduced to each other; that they do not speak as they pass by.

They suggest that a possible inhabitant of Saturn, looking on this globe, observes the grotesque contradiction of the doctrine of universal love and human brotherhood taught on Sundays, and the cut-throat doctrine of the survival of the fittest and the devil for the hindmost, practiced during the remainder of the week—the spectacle of a civilization on whose lips are the ethics of humanity and whose working scheme is a struggle for existence between man and man deadlier than the feuds of savagery—a scheme of society in which morality and the market have agreed not to interfere with each other. They answer that this state of things *has* a cure, and that this cure is for each man to give his labor to his fellow-men, and to take from the common product of labor the means for his own life.

The people who make this charge against the existing order of things and suggest this remedy are mostly poor. They have not this world's goods. It has been urged against them that their philosophy is born not of their brains but of their pockets—where there is plenty of room. It has been said that the best cure for the socialist would be to give him a house and lot. That might cure the dishonest socialist, but it would not meet his doctrine. To cure socialism you must answer its argument. There are wise and respectable men who make answer. They assert that the present order of things is the best possible for this world. They assert that the philosophy of socialism—all men for

one man and one man for all—is a beautiful dream; that if it became a reality it would bring greater oppression than is now endured. They affirm that the world is growing daily better and happier; that its existing order will in the end throw off its own evils. They say that the scheme of enlightened self-interest, every man for himself, is the only scheme by which the progress of man and the evolution of his faculties are possible. They say that this scheme is scientific. This is their argument. Scientific enlightened self-interest is a splendid phrase; it is a part of scientific knowledge that can be understood by those innocent of all other science. It can be understood even by a millionaire.

The wise and respectable people who are in love with the present order of the world—who make this answer to the socialist, are mostly comfortable in this world's possessions. They have farms, counting-houses, professorships, libraries, and cool bedrooms in the summer. *Their* philosophy, also, might be accused of having origin in pockets—where there is not so much room. But there is a more serious difficulty about it. There is a steadily-increasing number of people who do not believe in it, and there are steadily-increasing reasons for their disbelief. While these respectable and comfortable people are engaged in their libraries and banks in demonstrating that the present industrial arrangement, among men is the only scientific possible arrangement, and that it will finally eliminate inequality and injustice from society, the *facts* in the world outside do not seem to proceed in harmony with this view of the case. Cunning continues to grasp the wealth of the world. Fraud piles up colossal fortunes in the hands of the few. Corporations corrupt the sources of public power. The larger industries steadily absorb the smaller, driving increasing numbers of

independent men and women into the dependent ranks of wage earners, the profits of their labor running to the hands of the fortunate. Monopolies and trusts swallow for the benefit of individuals the legitimate opportunities and gains of millions of men. A million of honest women in our great cities slave for beggarly crusts that would not feed the cat of the millionaire. The world is filled with discontented labor. By every sun that rises we read reports from some part of this republic of the strikes or lock-outs of thousands of workmen, significant of mighty personal suffering and mighty public loss. The order of society is riotous and rotten with industrial war. In the midst of abundance, a million of willing Americans are tramping for bread.

These are open facts; nobody denies them. They are bad for the theory of the existing order of things in this world. They are bad for the assurances of the comfortable gentlemen of the libraries and parlors, who answer the complaint of the socialist. Their arguments would seem to have nothing to do with the case.

These facts apply in greater or less degree to the condition of every civilized country of the world. They are the facts which to-day are rocking the nations as they have not been rocked for a thousand years in the lap of war. They are the facts by the side of which all other facts—of learning, of art, of discovery, or commerce, or law—are as nothing. They are the facts which have met civilization in its pathway as the old Theban Sphinx met the traveler, who must solve its riddle or die. They make the problem of our time.

But for this occasion let us confine them to our own country. That they should exist here in their most flagrant and threatening form in the land dedicated to the

equal rights and the equal chances of men, is the most extraordinary event in history.

What is it that has happened ?

For a thousand years, covering the Dark Ages, the world was ruled by force. Might was the law of right. Humanity was a foot-ball tossed by conquerors. It believed in the divine right of kings and lords. It made no assertion of its dignity. The gentleman wore a sword as his badge of power. The peasant slept on husks in the valley, and worked for the prince on the hill-top. There were no peoples; there were only lords and serfs. This was believed to be the natural order of things. At length there came a change. The human soul quickened. It began to be felt that there were rights of men. The people sought power. They dethroned autocrats. By the end of the eighteenth century nearly every nation in Christendom had achieved something of political privilege. Then on the western shores of the Atlantic, a young nation arose in its might, bade ultimate farewell to kings, threw out the flag of equal rights, and humanity rose to its full stature, clothed with dignity and power.

That was America! That was the achievement of Americans a century ago. It was the jubilee of humanity. The creed of Christ had touched the creed of the State. The eye of the world was strained toward the new continent. With equal political rights it was believed that here would be equal chances for all men—that the race for life would be fair; that the cards would not be marked—that the dice in the game would not be loaded.

The citizens of the early republic were fellow-laborers under this inspiring faith. Every man had his farm, his shop, or his trade. All were independent workers. There

were no autocrats of industry. There was not a tramp on the continent. In the hardest stress of life men stretched forth their hands and reached those of their fellows, and felt the quick touch of human brotherhood.

That bright picture of equality was brief. Unexpected elements entered civilization. Steam, electricity, and machinery—the genii of fire and force and speed—came to destroy the simple order of the past. Industry was warped into colossal lines. The handicrafts went to the wall. Aggregated capital purchased the gigantic implements of the new time. Human labor was bound to the machine. Iron and steel became despots harder than any political tyrants. The wisdom of the fathers did not anticipate the problem. Political freedom did not comprehend it. Parading its liberties, American humanity, like its handicrafts, went to the wall. Augustus Cæsar boasted that he could rule the Romans as he pleased as long as he assured them that they were free. Lord Chesterfield, at the age of seventy, was in the habit of saying to his old servant Tyrawley: “Ty, you and I have been dead for many years if we only knew it. Let us walk down town and rehearse our funeral.”

When railroad corporations elect Legislatures in fifteen American States, American liberty is rehearsing its funeral.

For this state of things whose is the fault? That is not the question. The facts are here. Their cause is human stupidity colossal as a planet. An age of science should have sounded warning a half a century ago. Neglecting the “proper study of mankind,” it has afflicted us with redundant learning on bugs.

Edmund Burke said that the respectable fabric of political society was the result of the blundering of one part of mankind operating with the villainy of the other. That

has been the industrial history of the United States. Playing with forces so strange and mighty that they have changed the face of the world, we have drifted into a new epoch of civilization, and continued to apply to its problems the wisdom of the ancients. Attempting to carry the commerce of the Atlantic in the galley-boats of the Romans, would be idiocy less stupendous.

Two hundred years ago, the common sense and the statutes of England made it a crime to make monopolies in the food of the people. To-day a committee of the American Congress finds on investigation that four butchers in the settlement of Chicago have "cornered" the meat of two-thirds of the continent. The man who corners the "meat of the masses" should hang—by the side of his dressed meat.

"Combine or die!" has become the motto of modern trade. Not less than seventy American industries have been forced into monster trusts, to hold up prices and keep profits in the purses of the few. A half a dozen pools threaten to presently control the bread, butter, and boots of the United States.

Even the solemn gentlemen who make our shrouds and coffins have formed a pool under the name of the "National Burial-Case Association." At the sound of this soothing and respectable title, we do not feel quite sure that we are not making a mistake in lingering above-ground. We have a sense that we may not be in quite the right company. We feel that we may owe it to ourselves to patronize these decorous gentlemen and get buried—and join the respectable majority.

Not long ago these lugubrious gentlemen met in melancholy conclave in Philadelphia, and, imagining themselves in a cemetery, proceeded to lay a tax on death. Their

action to keep up the prices and down the number of coffins was kept secret, for fear the doctors might become discouraged and mortality lessened.

Then the dealers in old rags and paper formed a trust in Cleveland, to deal with the old-rag problem—of how to cut down the enormous profits of the women of our country out of the contents of their rag-bags. The decree of the old rag-barons, issued in solemn council, ran: "No reduction in prices for old rags without consulting the syndicate."

Half a dozen gigantic monopolies, headed by their king, have well-nigh appropriated the government of the United States. Their king is the railroads—the monopoly of transportation. These monopolies have assumed functions of power and privileges of taxation unfamiliar to a Persian shah or the Russian czar. Actual statistics upon this subject prove that the taxes in excess of fair profits levied by these monopolies upon the American people are sufficient to carry on three perpetual foreign wars.

By the force of combination, every ton of coal burned in the United States costs the consumer one-third more than its actual price, with fair profits to the monopoly handling it.

The coal pirates of Pennsylvania and adjacent States thus mulct from a patient people a yearly tribute of forty millions of dollars. That "octopus of American trusts," the Standard Oil Monopoly, has piled up its two hundred millions of capital by the same conspiracy—a tax upon the people's heat and light, "whipped from the nation's pocket," equal to the cost of a continual war with Spain or Mexico.

Exemplary among these tender-hearted monopolies is

the gigantic Western Union Telegraph Combination, which, with the confident digestion of a Dodo, swallowed, a quarter of a century ago, sixty different companies at a gulp. With thirty-five millions of dollars of actual assets, this monopoly collects interest off the public on a nominal stock capital of one hundred millions of dollars, the slight difference between substance and shadow being fifty-five millions of pure water; thus levying upon the people of the United States, by reason of this fictitious stock, a tax equal to that on a permanent debt of \$150,000,000 of three per cent government bonds—the American and civilized way of doing it. Add to the extortion of this monopoly that of the Chicago butchers on the meat of the Great West, and you can fight England and Canada with the spoils every day in the year.

The profits of the American railway barons are levied, in all, on a fictitious debt of *four thousand millions of dollars!* That would support a perpetual war against the Russian czar to aid the cause of the Nihilists.

The robberies of the other American trusts and corporations would maintain another war against the remaining nations of Europe; or, in the year 1890, the people of the United States can wage a standing fight against the civilized world, with more money in their pockets, than in suffering the exactions of their own industrial tyrants. And yet that stupid generation of the American fathers plunged, like school-boys, into revolution for a three-cent tax on tea! They were young and callow. They had not learned the patient ox-eyed philosophy which comes of high civilization in the golden age of trusts. A hundred and fifty American industries are shuffled in the hands of pool-mongers like a deck of cards. An American billion-

aire buys up, at a stroke, seventy coal mines, within as many miles of St. Louis, to steal the cheapness of warmth from his fellow-men.

Think again of these sweet-mannered modern buccaneers—the great American railroads! The National Rich Man's Club—the caucus of millionaires—sitting as the United States Senate, reports, in a swift spasm of confidence, after a careful investigation, that these railways, the common carriers of the land, which have received their franchises and privileges from the people, levy a tax on their benefactors which the National Congress would not dare assume. A committee of the New York Legislature, making similar investigation, confirms this report by stating that the tribute laid by these corporations upon the nation is one which “no government would dare levy upon *any* people.”

Approach the gentlemen who sit in the gilded palaces of these corporations, and ask their terms for the shipment of any new product of labor, and you are submitted to an inquisition as to the profits of your private business in the manufacture of that commodity which the most despotic State would blush to impose on its subjects.

The rule of robbery with these Robin Hoods of the modern highway is “all that the traffic will bear.” Their motto of prudence is not to kill the goose. But sometimes the goose expires under the plucking. A Nebraska farmer read in his weekly paper the market price for corn. Believing that there was a fair profit for his labor, he shipped his entire harvest by the neighboring railway to the great city, and awaited his financial returns. They promptly came. They were a bill against the farmer for *fifteen dollars!*—the balance in favor of the railroad after deducting

the selling price of the corn. The farmer hunted up an ancient algebra of his school-days, computed and paid a minus profit. The next year he hunted rabbits.

On the rich prairies by the Missouri, the average estimate for shipping three hundred bushels of corn to market is two hundred bushels for the railways.

That is what is the matter with the American farming industry! Not long ago a governor of Kansas in a message to the Legislature of his State, said: "If the extortion of our railways is not speedily corrected, agriculture in the western half of this State will have to be abandoned. Only the marvelous wealth and productive energy of the State have thus far enabled the people to pay such sums annually."

Under the exactions of this Cæsarian brigandage, the farming lands of that imperial State are passing rapidly into the dead hand of Eastern pawn-brokers. A recent memorial to its representatives in Congress from citizens of that State, recites that a single law firm in an inconsiderable Kansas town holds eighteen hundred mortgages on as many Kansas farms. An eloquent Californian asserts that the railroad monopoly of his State has gone into partnership with every farmer in California, "with the corporation on top."

Computing generously for every cost, including running expenses, interest on invested capital, and replacement of worn-out tracks and cars, a United States citizen can be transported from San Francisco to Boston in a twenty-thousand-dollar Pullman coach for a cost of less than *two dollars*. A United States hog can be carried over the same ground for the same price. The railroad companies charge the citizen for this ride one hundred and thirty dollars.

They charge the hog *only six dollars and a half*. That is the advantage in the United States of being a hog! The advantage of being a hog is the same as that of being a railway. But we can't all be hogs.

An Irish car driver in the city of San Francisco points to the central building of the great railway corporation, and with the graphic rheotric of his race informs the tender-foot stranger that "*inside of them walls is the whole Stute of California!*" The information is superfluous to the native sons of the Golden West. They know their master. How long will Americans endure these masters?

These hideous facts are only pimples on the body of the chartered corruptions of our time. The railroads simply accept the business morals of the age—save that they run them by steam. Into the hands of these giant monopolies a confiding nation has surrendered rights and powers overshadowing and corrupting its own authority. If you would touch for wholesome legislation the hem of the garments of power, go no longer to Washington. American sovereignty has retreated into the offices of corporations. Against the gold which was a conquered people's ransom, the Spartan tyrant threw the weight of his sword. Against the liberties of a robbed nation the gigantic corporations of this republic throw the weight of their ill-gotton gold. Mr. Jay Gould informs an investigating committee of the New York Legislature that the railroads have gone out of politics, having found it cheaper to *buy* legislators than to elect them! Lord Eldon said: "Corporations have neither souls to be saved nor bodies to be kicked." One would believe that this noble lord had been making American studies of the entities he described.

We are in the midst of an epoch facing despots more

grim than all the autocrats of history. The barbarous feudal lord—the baron of the hill-top—allowed his serfs their crust and ale, and to sleep without fear in their huts at the foot of his castled crag. The despot of our modern industry drives enlightened freemen to starvation and despair. By recent statistics of the United States Labor Department, one million of willing Americans are tramping the streets of our cities and the highways of the land hunting for work and bread. Think of that for the “best government the sun ever shone upon!” With grain in our fields to feed the hunger of a planet, that is a spectacle to discredit the intelligence of any epoch of history. If this is civilization, what is barbarism? In my judgment that human society only is a success which feeds and shelters all its honest members.

Political privilege has failed to solve the problem. Equal rights have not saved the equal chances of men. American liberty has not proved itself the last wisdom of time. The magic exhilaration of pinching a ballot is lost on an empty stomach. Equal rights pall on the fancy of the citizen uncertain of a square meal.

The vote is no longer the symbol of American equality. The moneyless man and the millionaire do not make an equation on election-days. By a hundred indirections the owner of a million dollars may multiply his vote to a hundred or a thousand. The sense of American equality has been lost. The eagle has become a little less proud. His countenance is sickly. His wings droop. The Fourth of July orator no longer steps nimbly to the front. Something has happened. Something is the matter. He hardly knows what. But it has dawned even upon his exuberant optimism that things are no longer as they were. He has

heard of an election in Ohio—a million of dollars eloping with a thimbleful of brains and becoming United States Senator. He has heard of a syndicate lock-out in the coal fields of Pennsylvania to raise the price of coal, and which has written despair over the doorways of a hundred thousand laborers. He has heard of the corner on meat by the four butchers of Chicago. He is saddened. He goes home; his occupation is gone. The sawdust is out of the great American doll-baby—the Fourth of July.

What has happened? Civilization promised the toiling masses of the world the lifting of its weary burdens. It promised liberty, equality, prosperity. It has not kept its promise. American civilization promised most of all. Its lips were roses. It promised to all men. There is disappointment. A country whose products will nourish a billion of men whose machinery will supply the planet—scarce sixty millions on its soil, a million of men begging for the privilege to earn their bread. That is civilization with a vengeance!

Why has the doctrine of equal rights in the State failed to soften the inequality of conditions between men? With the creed of human brotherhood on its lips, why does our civilization deepen the gulf between classes? The moneyless workingman and the cunning millionaire side by side in the gates of the twentieth century! How came they here together? Has the race between these two been honest?

Three-quarters of a century ago, in the beginning of the epoch of steam, wise men said: "We have arrived at the golden age; the giants have come to bear the burdens of men. The gods of fire and force will enrich this fair world; there will be enough for all. Poverty will vanish like a

dream. The music of wheels, the laughter of steam and steel, will take the place of the groans of men. There will be leisure for the heart and brain of our race."

What a mockery that golden vision appears to-day! Three-quarters of a century have passed. The gods have done their part. The wealth of the world has multiplied a hundred-fold. Civilization has grown rich—rich beyond prophecy. The gold of the Cæsars and the treasures of the old East—of the nations by the "Oxus and the Ind"—are as a pallid dream beside the imperial wealth of modern States. That old opulence compared with ours was as their crude galley-boats to the queenly ships that cleave our modern seas.

The machinery of the two Anglo-Saxon nations—America and England—are equal in producing power to one billion of men. Its products would gladden the great human heart of this world. It would soften the poverty of the planet. It would feed the hunger of savage and civilized men—and honest civilized men still ask for bread!

In 1860 the wealth of the United States was \$16,000,000,000. To-day it is \$55,000,000,000—forty billions in thirty years! Where is that wealth? where is that money? Let us see!

It was Daniel Webster who said, "The freest government cannot long endure where the tendency of the law is to create a rapid accumulation of property in the hands of the few." It has been wisely asserted that the constitutions of free States are made to prevent the encroachments of capital—that the diffusion of wealth is the secret of a nation's power.

"That nation is the most prosperous which contains the greatest number of happy homes," eloquently declares the chief of our national labor department.

Thirty years ago you counted the men of this country who owned a million dollars on your finger tips. To-day there are seventy fortunes in the United States of more than twenty millions each. Poor but respectable people worth only a million or two of dollars each are numbered by the thousands. No country town sets up pretensions to respectability without having at least one of these representatives of genteel poverty as an inhabitant.

The town of Chicago has over two hundred persons with fortunes of from one to fifty millions each. A local newspaper of that region points with pride to the fact that *every dollar of the wealth of these gentlemen has been made within the past fifteen years!* We would have expected better of Chicago, where conscience is notably active—and where they have all the meat; but this is commendable rapidity.

They do it better in the city by the Golden Gate, where an impoverished citizen worth only a few hundred thousand dollars has made two millions in a day.

They do it better in some other American localities. Six months before his death, it was known in the commercial world that, by the shrinkage of values, the great Vanderbilt had lost nearly fifty millions of his wealth. But almost in the face of that dread hour which swung behind him the gates of all earthly fortune, the great billionaire, by a single gigantic stroke, regained the lost stake. Hanging to life by the eyelids, he quietly manipulated a few railroads—a game he understood. He secretly depressed the value of their stocks. Then he sent agents into the market to buy them up wholesale. The stocks, being in demand, rose to unprecedented worth. Then Croesus unloaded, astonished the world, and died with the greatest private fortune known to history intact.

That is what a dying man can do in New York, under the laws of American industry! But the fifty millions in the purse of the billionaire represented the wreck of the little fortunes of a thousand innocent men and women, while a hundred gamblers of Wall Street fattened on the spoils.

Three Americans of our generation severally beginning life with a bundle of firs, the deck of a ferry-boat, and a mouse-trap, have amassed fortunes of one and two hundred millions each. That demonstrates the capacity of the American mouse-trap. These are our modern Caliphs of Bagdad.

There are one hundred private fortunes in the United States, aggregating \$3,000,000,000—one-twentieth of the entire wealth of the American people! There are one hundred thousand Americans whose combined possessions constitute more than one-half of the property of the United States. One-half of the wealth of the nation in one hundred thousand purses!

That is what has become of the wealth of the American people! That is the answer to the question of what has been done with the riches of the nation produced by the genii of modern science and invention. That is what has been accomplished in thirty years under the best government the sun ever shone upon!

This is the answer of the land of the Declaration and equal rights! These thrifty gentlemen have simply frozen out more than one-half of their sixty millions of fellow-citizens.

The money made by the common forces and the common toil of the nation is in those private heaps. The till of civilization has been tapped.

In thirty years more the property of the country, unless prevented, will be in half as many hands as now. Compared with the wealth which has been produced, the American people have remained poor. Millions of honest toilers have remained only less than beggars. The English philosopher, Mr. Frederic Harrison, tells us that ninety per cent of the producers of England have no homes.

An eloquent pen has written: "It was hoped in the dawning era of modern invention that all servile and exhausting toil would be lifted from man; that all the necessities of life would be so multiplied that the poor would cease to want." It was John Stuart Mill who affirmed that it was questionable whether all the mechanical inventions had ever lightened the evil of any human being.

But there are those mountains of wealth! Here are these valleys of poverty! Between them is significance. There is a connecting link. What is that link? Shrewd men in the streets tell us that it is "sagacity," "energy," "enterprise," "brains." "Smart" men in the colleges say that it is the "wages of superintendence."

American common sense and morality begin to call it by other names not so sweet. These names are "injustice," "fraud," "cunning," "robbery"—"humanity pillaged by buccaneers."

But let us not go too fast. American intelligence and morality may be wrong. They may need enlightenment.

There is a curious thing called

POLITICAL ECONOMY.

They have it in the colleges. It is in preservation there. It should be approached with care and reverence. It has sometimes been handled by kings; but modern legis-

lators have always been afraid of it. They have been afraid that if they got too near it something might happen—that it might explode. It is two or three thousand years old. Something has been known of it for that time. The Pharaohs had a sample of it. But it has been called a science for not much more than a hundred years. A very wise man stated its laws in the latter part of the last century. His name was Smith. He believed devoutly in the principles of his science, but he never dreamed what a wild African terror his aristocratic name would inspire among the wise men of this world who should come after him.

This science assumes that there is enough work in this world for every man and woman; that they can always find this work near at hand; that there will always be enough products of human labor—food, shelter, and clothing—to go round—and never too few or too many; for a mysterious thing called “Supply and Demand” attends to all that. This science assumes that there will never be too few or too many laborers in one kind of work; because if there are too few, the products of that work will become scarce and dear, the wages high, and other laborers will come in; if there are too many, the products of the work will be plentiful and cheap, the wages low, and laborers will go into some other occupation where there is greater demand—that another mysterious thing, called “Freedom of Contract,” will take care of all that.

That science tells us that competition in each industry, and between the various industries, will keep the price of products reasonable and the profits of the various industries uniform and equitable, giving each man a fair chance in the struggle for life.

The scheme of this beautiful science, when they had

worked out all its mysterious details,—capital, wages, profit, rent, interest, etc.,—they called by an elegant French name, *laissez faire*—the “let-alone,” or “let-go” scheme. Then they let it go. They asserted that it had been going for two or three thousand years, and that it was the only scheme that would go in this world and leave human beings the chance for liberty and happiness.

There is a great deal of wisdom in this splendid and elaborate science. There is a great deal of truth that has not been entirely escaped by its mysterious doctrines. The study of these doctrines has brought a great deal of knowledge as well as a great deal of insanity into this world. There must always be some insanity in anything which is respectable. This science is respectable, but it is not fascinating. Mark Twain assured his wife concerning their first baby that he *respected* it, though he did not love it.

This scheme called political economy is believed in implicitly by a great many English and American college professors. That settles its social status. It is a pet in nearly all the colleges of the United States, except Johns Hopkins, where they are studying it, along with other curiosities, to see what it is made of. Inside of some of these institutions called universities, where they teach theology, astronomy and the dead languages, it is perfectly satisfactory. The professors get five thousand dollars a year; the students are the sons and daughters of comfortable families, where supply and demand are always equal, and *laissez faire* works like a charm.

It is so satisfactory to these institutions that occasionally when it does not work so well outside, and leaves working-people very needy and poor, there are friends of humanity among these scholarly gentlemen who are willing to devote

their time to composing recipes of shin-bone soup, on which they assert that the American laborer can live on six and a fourth cents a day. This soup is not recommended to millionaires and professors. It is merely the soup of political economy. It is the soup of science. It is the soup of theory—it is shadow soup.

Independently of these facts, Mr. Smith's theory of political economy, invented before the discovery of steam-power and electricity, is fit to be the monument of the genius of any man. It was a great thing to do in his time. I speak of it reverently.

But this splendid and august theory, this wonderful and mysterious entity, called *laissez faire*, placed in practice on American soil consecrated a century ago to equal rights, has created in that century as vast a result of human inequality—of contrasted want and wealth, of poverty and power—as was known to the rotten reign of the Cæsars. It has distorted the just conditions of social life. It has estranged classes of citizens. It has placed the wages of toil in the hands of idleness. It has made Cunning a prince and Honesty a pauper. It has made Industry a slave to feed Indolence as a parasite. It has written despair over the doorways of millions of homes. It has dwarfed Childhood with premature toil. It has filled the breast of Labor with discontent, and the streets of cities with the tramp of soldiers in times of peace. It has placed manufacture under the surveillance and protection of hired detectives—the Pinkertons and the police. It has laid the dead hand of debt on the ploughman, and pawned the lands of the West to the princes of the East. It has given to millionaire gamblers and railroad monarchs the power to lay an embargo on the wheat fields of the prairies, and “with a stroke

of a pen to make famine crouch in the streets of our cities." It has made tender women toil for the pittance of beggars, or flee to prostitution for bread. It has made the anarchist and the tramp. It has handed over to merciless co-operations the gigantic industries of the nation, to unseat the will and debauch the conscience of the nation itself. It has enfeebled the sense of national honor. It has made pillage for private greed of the resources of a mighty and generous people. It has kidnapped for monopoly the government of the United States.

Under this shooting Niagara they tell us that water does not flow downhill!

So much for the immaculate scheme of *laissez faire* in unrestricted play on American soil for a century! This precious professorial doctrine should gladden American vanity in the stupendous. Its achievements have been miracles. It has shorn this nation, which began in liberty a century ago, of the power of volition—the Delilah to the American giant. In the streets of our cities, on election-days, the vote of an American sovereign is bought for a barrel of flour, because bread has become more precious than the ballot. In twenty States of this Union we innocently ask which is the railroad's candidate for Congress. That settles the question. We are sure that he is the most honest man.

Every American industry passes rapidly into the hands of monopoly. The millions that are made pass to the pockets of the few, the Jack Sheppards and Dick Turpins of American Society. These are the gentlemen who emigrate to the United States Senate, sit like kings at the head of syndicates, give feasts like Lucullus, purchase the admiration of a grateful people by flinging back to them in charities a fragment of the spoils of which they have robbed them, and

lie in marble mausoleums costing a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, when they are dead. We do not envy them living or dead. They, too, are the victims of the industrial morals of their time. They sell "futures;" they would sell eternity if they could. But while they feast or lie in costly and useless marbles, a million of their honest countrymen are tramping for a crust.

No dead American has a right to lie under a grave-stone worth a hundred and fifty thousand dollars while a live American woman is starving in a garret.

The wealth of this world belongs to the quick and not to the dead. Civilization is not rich enough to furnish mausoleums for dead capitalists—or yachts for live ones. Its industries should be devoted to producing the necessities of life as long as one needy human being exists.

So much for eighteenth-century political economy in nineteenth-century civilization! So much for the science of an age of dreams in an age of steam! So much for the results of the philosophy of Adam Smith in the New Republic!

How much for its intelligence? It has not been a success in practice; it may be wise in theory. It may have failed by accident. The professors assure us that it is wise. They affirm that it is a science. They assert that it is the only scheme by which human beings can live side by side in this world with the assurance of peace and prosperity. They assert that it is the only scheme by which the industrial order of the world can be maintained. We should not be too hasty in disputing their verdict. If there is anything in this world approaching omniscience, it is the brain of a college professor of political economy.

But let us see! This science is the alleged science of

supply and demand. This principle, they say, will regulate and adjust the conditions of human labor. This is the principle under which the order of society now exists. But for two-quarters of a century the most remarkable and persistent feature of our modern industrial order has been the war between capital and labor—between employer and employed. Ugly things called strikes and lock-outs cover every civilized land. Not a week, not a day passes, but shops and mills close, industries cease, and thousands and hundreds of thousands of workingmen turn to idleness in the streets. The sensitive ear of humanity is assailed with the clangor of human rage and suffering. The man with the purse is testing the supply of labor to purchase it at the most beggarly price. The man with a tin bucket is testing capital to get a larger share of profit. The conflict is merciless, endless, deadly. The splendid theory of the professors—Supply and Demand—works perfectly in the air, over their heads. Like the flowers that bloom in the spring it has nothing to do with the case.

The United States Government, through its department of labor, has looked into this matter. It finds that ten millions of days' labor are lost through this conflict to the productive force of this country in a single year. It has found that the loss to the country in the same time by this cause is \$300,000,000—enough to support the havoc of another foreign war at nearly a million a day. This is scientific economy with a vengeance. This is the *laissez faire* of the college professors at full play.

There is another feature of this scientific economy. They call it the dismal science. You see that it has been slandered, that it is a very entertaining study. Under this beautiful and perfect system, a man or set of men with a

bank account sets up a manufactory of products—of food or clothing or soap or pills or iron nails. Other men and other companies set up other manufactories of these goods in other parts of the country. These establishments know nothing accurately of the conditions of the supply or demand in these products. There is no understanding between them. There cannot be by the nature of the case; this is competition. They know nothing accurately of the ability or intentions of each other in regard to production. The inspired principles of political economy working in the air should teach them all this; but they do not. So they manufacture goods at full steam, launch them by all cunning ways on the great unknown sea of demand, the market; and each tries to steal the trade and crush the business of his rivals; for this is the Christian principle of modern competition.

Some day, early in the morning, it is found that there are more soap and starch and shoes and sugar and suspenders and cotton goods, and iron nails, than anybody or everybody will buy. Pills have become, so to speak, a "drug in the market." Factories suspend or close. Workmen are turned into the streets. Without wages they cannot buy these goods or other goods. They want them, but cannot buy them. This the professors of Mr. Smith's political economy call "Over-production." Then other manufactories suspend. There is a crash—universal poverty and misery. But the professors are prepared for this also. They give it a scientific name. They call it an "Industrial Depression." That vindicates their science. Whenever you wish to be certain that a thing is scientific just see if you can understand its names. If you cannot understand them, then it is a science.

But this system without organic unity or co-ordination—this chaos turned loose for human suffering—is the scientific scheme of political economy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century among civilized peoples! One wonders how this scheme looks to those who dwell above the stars.

The poet Watts has told us that there is a land that is fairer than this. Suppose from up there, having a little pardonable curiosity as to how things are managed under the “best government the sun ever shone upon,” they should send down a celestial expert to investigate the United States. Suppose that heavenly messenger should arrive in one of these eras of industrial depression. He would float with swift angelic wings over the bosom of this broad land. He would see the prairies waving with golden grain, the barns and bins heaped full with accumulated harvests, the pork fattening in the valleys, the cattle feeding on a thousand hills. He would see the warehouses and shops of the hamlets and great cities filled with the supplies of human want—with stores of food and clothing and luxuries. He would see millions of strong men idle and threadbare and hungry in the roads and streets—millions of sad-eyed women and children standing by the shop windows looking longingly upon the piled objects of their need—which they could not buy. He would see millions more with the fear of the future shadowing their faces. Then he would ask a few questions and return to that upper world and report to its Sanhedrim. He would tell the strange and pitiful tale of want in the midst of plenty. They would ask him in amazement whether he had received no explanation of such a strange condition of things as this. He would answer that he had; that he had applied to the college professors—the political economists; that they had made the matter

quite clear; that these gentlemen had assured him that the reason why their fellow-citizens were idle was because too much work had been done in the world; that the reason why women and children were threadbare and ragged was because there was too much clothing; the reason why they were homeless was because there were too many houses; that the reason why men were starving was because there was too much wheat and bread! that there was a "glut in the market"—an "industrial depression!"

The Sanhedrim would ask this angelic expert if he was satisfied with this explanation? He would reply that he was; that the professors had demonstrated that the scheme by which these things happened was *scientific*—that he had become a convert to Mr. Smith. Then for the first time in the history of Paradise, they would levy a tax to build a celestial idiot asylum, and that fallen angel would become its first inmate.

So much for the intelligence of *laissez faire*! How stands its morality? In one of the royal libraries of the world there was said to be extant a few centuries ago an ancient book, entitled a "History of Snakes in Ireland." That volume, with its many chapters, and its curious binding of massive gilt and gold, contained but a single sentence. That sentence was as follows: "As to snakes in Ireland, there are none there." A similar volume would hold the description of the morality of *laissez faire* political economy—the doctrine of the modern competitive system of labor. There is none *there*.

Professor J. Stanley Jevons, one of the high priests of this doctrine, informs us in one of his books that the first step in the study of political economy is to rid the mind of the notion that there are any such things in matters of social industry as "abstract rights."

That is the morality of Wall Street—just sufficient to keep out of the penitentiary! That is the morality of the Paul Cliffords and Jesse Jameses, who hold up railroad trains on the western slopes. That is the morality of Jay Gould, who buys up a hundred coal mines at a stroke to keep up the price of the poor man's heat. These gentlemen are the apt and searching pupils of Mr. Jevons. His political economy furnishes the convenient principle of their trade. *They* are not troubled about abstract rights. *They* are political economists.

A professor of Yale College, another unextinct pachyderm of modern learning, assures us that "social classes owe nothing to each other." Why is it that when the schemes of Satan are to be upheld in this world, the wisdom of the university and pulpit is so often at its call?—slavery, autocracy, robbery!

When they salt a California or Colorado gold mine, a learned professor is always on tap to sell it to a London syndicate. If these things be modern learning, let us abandon scholarship and betake ourselves to the university of humanity and the streets.

They prove to us, with curious and labored statistics, that the condition of the laborer of to-day is better than that of the poor man of history. They assail us with the maudlin argument that the modern workingman enjoys comforts unknown to the prince of a few centuries ago; that the feudal lord, like his serf, slept on bulrushes, and the modern poor man under a blanket—as if it were a question of bed-clothes rather than of the security of sleep!

There is a difference between absolute and relative poverty. The poverty of past centuries was relative. That of to-day is absolute. The blankets and bread of the nine-

teenth century are better than the rushes and crusts of the middle ages; but humanity in the middle ages was at least certain of its crusts and rushes.

The morality of the competitive system, outside of a book, is the morality of medieval barbarism that made Might the basis of Right—the savage doctrine of the survival of the strongest, that strips Humanity naked at the feet of Cunning; that places manhood at the mercy of meanness; that asserts in the sunrise of the twentieth century that man is merchandise—his heart and brain to be bought and sold in the cheapest market, like a bundle of old furs!

It is the morality of the Roman coliseum. In that savage arena they pitted man against his fellows to struggle with grievous and ghastly wounds to the death. When the gladiator fell he hailed the bloody tyrant who had devoted him to death, "*Morituri te salutamus Caesar!*" That, too, is the cry of dying workingmen to the Cæsar of Christian civilization as they fall in the murderous coliseum of competitive labor—men pitted against their fellows by the alternative of life or death—men pitted, by the struggle for bread, against steam and steel—a thousand times more pitiless than the steel of the Roman.

That struggle filled the arena of a holiday; ours is the perpetual conflict over the amphitheater of a continent.

The Christian cannot accense the pagan. The murder of his civilization is slower; its method is finer. Its horrors are tempered to the sensitive nerves of a generation whose lips are moist with the professions of the doctrine of the lowly Nazarene; but as sure as this world turns, and those stars come out in nightly majesty into their clean reproachful spaces, beneath this thing called modern civili-

zation—beneath this travesty of science that names itself industrial competition—there lies a barbarism more than pagan, a stupidity that is infinite.

Primitive man, the man of the woods and caves, would not endure hunger and want. He emerged for conquests and spoils. "The ravages of Atilla and Geneseric began from the stomach." Civilized want is shy and modest. It dresses itself, if it may, in the garb of respectability. It smiles in the face of the pitiless world. But underneath this ghastly complacency there exists to-day in the sharpened sensibilities of modern men and women a mass of acute agonies such as never pierced the heart of savage races.

The industrial competition under which we live is adjusted only to the satisfaction of the fortunate. Those who fall in the struggle with the praises of human dignity and equality ringing in their ears, naturally accuse the scheme which has brought them despair. Victor Hugo has said, "The paradise of the rich is the hell of the poor." Under the American flag there should be no hungry man. On American soil there should be no want. A great philosopher has said that while there exists an honest man without enough to eat, no man should have more than enough.

But they tell us of the freedom of contract—the sacred freedom of contract between wealth and the workingman! That is freedom indeed!—the "iron law of wages!" Wealth can wait; wages starve in a day. The freedom of contract with Death in the scales against the workingman!

That is the grim sarcasm of the freedom of contract.

Cardinal Manning, the great Catholic Englishman, declares that the freedom of contract on which political economy glorifies itself "cannot be rightly said to exist." He appeals to the great Catholic Church to protect the laboring poor who have builded the modern commonwealths.

It was said of the Italian Caesar Borgia, that he was a soldier every inch of him, but a villain to the last fiber. Caesar Borgia said: "If a man wishes for success he must not hesitate to make stepping-stones of the corpses of his neighbors."

That is the morals of nineteenth-century Industry. A heart of flint and a conscience as devoid of moral consideration as an absence of all fear can make it, are the chief stock in trade for success in modern competition.

But the gentlemen of the colleges assure us that the evils of the competitive scheme arise not from the use but from the abuse of that system. They are right. The unrestricted use of that scheme anywhere in this world is its abuse. That scheme carries within it the seeds of its own defeat. It insures combination. Where combination is possible, competition is impossible. The wages of labor do not purchase back the products of labor. There follows stagnation, depression, wrong.

That is your beautiful Adonis of *laissez faire* when stripped naked! It is a padded hunchback. It has neither a brain nor a heart. The dismal science! It is the comic science. It would make the gods laugh. That scheme is not for this world; it is for some unknown planet—peopled with professors of political economy.

Man is not a commodity. He is not a compound of mathematical quantities or chemical gases. He has a heart and a brain, and between these spring a thousand needs and emotions. He has the instinct of love. He is conquered by justice. Any scheme for the computation of man which leaves out justice will in this world be a failure.

But the toilers of the world are told that they should be content. They are assured that they do not grow poorer—

that they receive more for their work than a century ago. The answer is no longer enough. The laborer has become intelligent. He is the child of the republic of free schools. He has read the Declaration. He has heard of the doctrine of Equal Rights. He has taught it to his children until it has become his own faith. He has caught the echo of the words of Mirabeau, "There are only three ways of acquiring property, by work, by begging, and by stealth." Civilization has increased his needs. He cannot live as did his fathers, on the bare floors of a cabin. The glitter of his century would fill him with shame. Respectability would desert him. From his valley of poverty he points to those peaks of wealth and answers: "Those splendid heaps I helped to build; they are the product of my generation. I have worked for thirty years; my children are paupers, I have been robbed."

The laborer is right. He has a cause. He is logical. He is consistent with the teachings of the republic. If he is to be content with work and poverty, he should not have heard of the Declaration. He should have been protected from the New Testament. The only way to make men satisfied with work and poverty is to keep them ignorant. The slave-masters have understood this in every age. Free schools and industrial pauperism side by side are a mistake. The history of labor from the earliest times shows that capital left to itself forces wages to a bare subsistence. A free government cannot afford to have its citizens dwarfs and paupers.

The workingman understands all this. He is fond of telling the story of the man with the mule and a patch of ground. The man said to the mule: "I will harness you to the plough and plough this land, on which I will raise beans.

"I will eat the beans; you shall have the stalks." The mule said to the man, "That will not be fair; I should have some beans." "You are unreasonable;" said the man, "your father was contented to eat thistles all his life." "That is true," said the mule; "but my father—he was an *ass*."

If there were any fair distribution of the products of human labor there would go out from all the homes of this land men and women to purchase abundance of the necessities of life. There would be none of the "alternating fevers and chills" of our present industrial order. There would be no "gluts of the market"—no "industrial depressions."

Three centuries before our era, the great Chinese sage, Mencius, taught that uncertainty as to the means of existence is the most important factor in the demoralization of a people. At the end of two centuries of unrestricted competition, three-fourths of the people of the most prosperous commonwealth of the world are insecure of the means of subsistence. We have approached the limit of the great speculative opportunities for wealth. Doubt paralyzes the limbs of industry. Dread poisons the sweetness of the world. Fear sits like a specter at our brief banquet of life. Gloom shadows the way of the toiling millions. What kind of a civilization is that whose heart is Fear?

Upon the results of this scheme of aggregated and aggregating wealth in the hands of individuals and corporations on the political morality of the nation, I need not speak. They are too familiar.

One-eighth of the total wealth of the United States belongs to the monopoly of transportation, the railroads. Its use in these hands for oppression and corruption is notorious. American statesmanship, like American sovereignty,

has retired into the offices of the corporations. The United States Senate sits directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, for "vested rights."

We have heard of government by kings, by oligarchies, by aristocrats. We began a century ago as a government by the people. We have ended, by giving the world a new study in political science—government by corporations. When the Pennsylvania railroad has no more business to transact in the legislature of that State, it is said that that political body adjourns.

The late Mr. Tweed, of New York, had an acute appreciation of American politics. He manipulated a city and stole fifty millions of dollars. He recorded his vocation on the register of Sing-Sing as that of a *statesman*! He "got even" with his friends outside.

What is the conclusion? How will it end? The Duke of Weimar, looking upon the schemes of Napoleon in the height of his power, said, "This will not last; it is unjust."

I am not here to picture the details of an ideal commonwealth. There will come other days and there will be other gods. When civilized man is less a barbarian, the glitter of gold, the red waumpum of the savage, will not intoxicate his senses. He will cease to be drunken with the lust of vulgar advantage over his fellow-men. The triumphs of the brain will measure his ambition. The triumphs of justice will ease his heart. The victories of art, the splendor of noble affections, will fill his dreams. That which is said here does not concern Utopian fancies. While there is human weakness there will be human suffering. But organized wrong is curable. It should be assailed. There are ideas which, intrenched for centuries, stop the march of our race. They are superstitions. Human soci-

ety has the right to examine from time to time the foundations on which it rests. It has the obligation to repair or renew these foundations when they have become rotten.

The power of human governments is co-extensive with the welfare of peoples. It is limited by that welfare. To that limit it must approach. "*Salus populi suprema lex est*" is one of the oldest maxims of human government. The open secret of history is that justice and virtue lie deeper than institutions; that honesty is the preserver of nations. Beyond all laws, beyond all government, beyond all institutions, beyond all vested rights, beyond all sneers, lie the indefeasible rights of man.

Before nothing less than the intrenched citadel of these rights in the organization of human states, will the march of humanity pause. They are demanded by the conscience of mankind. Their security is the goal of the race.

What are these rights? That oldest of the economists the wisest of the Greeks, Aristotle, treating of the natural wealth of the world—"the source and raw material of all other wealth"—summed it up in a single descriptive phrase, "the bounty of nature."

Supported by the great teachers of our kind, I affirm, as incontrovertible propositions commending themselves to the instinctive justice of man, that the world belongs to the living race; that the bounty of nature is the inheritance of all; that the wealth made by the common forces of any civilization is the common wealth. I affirm that the human hand is as sacred as the human brain. I affirm that the robbery of Cunning is as malignant as the robbery of Force. I affirm that every problem of the dealings between men is a moral problem. I affirm that no economic scheme for this world which ignores abstract rights is a science. I af-

firm that man's struggle should be with nature and not with his kind. I affirm that civilization without justice is a failure.

If for the realization of the rights here intimated, it is necessary to enter the gateway of the future by the partial or the absolute industrial co-operation of men, it is History that has led us to this door. There is no longer choice as to changing the route. The ruggedness of the present path has turned to an impossible steep. Struggling humanity, hungry and ragged in the presence of the riches it has created, has grown sick of its tyrants. The purpose of peoples is greater than the philosophy of the schools; and the peoples are saying, not "There should be," but, "There *shall* be a change!"

If the liberty of individual enterprise means only liberty for millionaires and hard luck for the masses, the world will turn once more to its primitive dream, the democracy of labor. That way, at least, lie justice and equality. That way lies escape from the lie of civilization—the preaching of its pulpits denied by the practice of its marts. That way lie the mighty hopes and the mighty instincts of our race. That way lies the solidarity of our kind. That way lies a dawn.

When the vision of their wrong is a little nearer, when its remedy seems clear, the citizens of this commonwealth will not falter in the fight. Two wars for human freedom they have already fought. Two triumphs for ideals they have won. The soil of this continent is consecrated to the solution of the problem of absolute justice for man.

The toiling millions of the earth look toward the Great Republic. It has given the world the spectacle of political government based upon the equality of manhood. There

is awaited at its hands the spectacle of industry based on the brotherhood of Toil. Over the redoubts of the Past, over the bastions of Wrong, over the dreams of the Old, bearing aloft the flag of the Declaration and the doctrines of the Nazarene, Americans will be the first to scale the heights and enter the citadel of the New Time.



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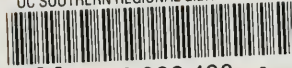
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